



## FACT SHEET

# Salmonella and Drinking Water from Private Wells

### What is salmonellosis?

Salmonellosis is an infection caused by the bacteria called *Salmonella*, which has been known to cause illness for more than 100 years. There are many different kinds of *Salmonella* bacteria, and they are spread through human or animal feces.

### How can I become infected with salmonellosis?

You can get salmonellosis by eating foods contaminated with animal feces. These foods are often of animal origin, such as beef, poultry, milk, or eggs. However, all foods including raw vegetables can become contaminated. Thoroughly cooking your food will kill the bacteria. Infected food handlers who do not wash their hands with soap and water after using the bathroom could easily spread the bacteria to the food they are preparing.

*Salmonella* may also be found in the feces of some pets, especially those with diarrhea. You can become infected if you do not wash your hands after touching the feces of these animals.

### Where and how does *Salmonella* get into drinking water?

*Salmonella* is found in every region of the United States and throughout the world. Millions of germs can be released in a bowel movement of an infected human or animal. *Salmonella* may be found in water sources such as private wells that have been contaminated with the feces of infected humans or animals. Waste can enter the water through various ways, including sewage overflows, polluted storm water runoff, and agricultural runoff.

### What are the symptoms of salmonellosis?

The most common symptoms of salmonellosis include diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps. Symptoms develop 12 to 72 hours after infection and usually last 4 to 7 days. Most people recover without treatment.

Some people may have severe diarrhea and may need to be hospitalized. In these people, the bacteria may spread from the intestines to the blood, and then to other parts of the body. Such infections can cause death if the person is not treated in time with antibiotics. The elderly, infants, and those with weakened immune systems are more likely to have a severe illness.

### What should I do if I think I have salmonellosis?

See your health care provider to discuss your concerns.

### How is a *Salmonella* infection diagnosed?

Laboratory tests can determine if *Salmonella* is the cause of illness. These tests will identify the bacteria in the stool samples from an infected person. Sometimes these tests are not performed unless the laboratory is asked specifically to look for the bacteria. Once the bacteria have been identified, further testing can determine its specific type and the right antibiotics to treat it.

## **Salmonellosis and Drinking Water from Private Wells**

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### **What is the treatment for salmonellosis?**

If you have salmonellosis, you will usually get better in 5 to 7 days. You probably will not require treatment unless you become severely dehydrated or if the infection spreads from the intestines to other parts of the body. If you have severe diarrhea, you may require rehydration therapy. If the infection spreads from the intestines, you may need antibiotics. Unfortunately, some *Salmonella* bacteria have become resistant to antibiotics. Consult with your health care provider.

### **How do I remove *Salmonella* from my drinking water?**

Fully boiling your water for 1 minute (3 minutes if you live in a high altitude) will kill or inactivate the bacteria. Water should then be stored in a clean container with a lid and refrigerated.

Currently, there is no filter certified to remove the bacteria from water. This issue is currently being studied.

You may also disinfect your well. Contact your local health department for the recommended procedures. Remember to test your well water periodically to make sure the problem does not recur.

For more information, visit [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/healthywater](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/healthywater)